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SUBJECT: CONTAINER SECURITY INITIATIVE: PROPOSED
RADIOLOGICAL PORTAL AGREEMENT CATAPULTED INTO PUBLIC
ATTENTION

REF: State 213786

1. Finance Minister Zalm's "agreement" with U.S. authorities regarding installation of radiological detectors in the port of Rotterdam received prominent attention in the afternoon (7/24) and morning (7/25) Dutch media. According to the press, Zalm expects he can soon launch the new security measures but has first to discuss the matter with shipping companies that utilize the Rotterdam port. Ministry of Finance press spokesmen are directly quoted in defense of the initiative noting that that the detection devices can " prevent the smuggling to the U.S. of material, which may be used for the production of nuclear weapons and that "shipping will hardly be delayed." In response to one newspaper's report that the Netherlands will bear the costs of the equipment, Zalm's spokesman emphasized that, usually, "the minister does nothing for free" implying that the Dutch may in return ask for U.S. support on other issues. The press also carried comments from a spokesman for EU Commissioner Bolkestein suggesting that the matter is more properly handled in a U.S.-EU context under the umbrella of the European-American Customs Agreement.

2. Comment: Officials from the Ministry of Finance and other government agencies we contacted today had been caught by surprise by the breaking of this story. They have not yet been given instructions regarding conclusion and implementation of final agreement on the portals and were unwilling to speculate on a possible timetable. Dutch officials had previously indicated their preference for a low-key approach in order to minimize the possibility of conflict with the European Commission over competence.

Russel